STATEMENT OF SENATOR BILL FRIST
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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPACE
SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON
NASA FISCAL YEAR 2000 BUDGET
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Good morning. I would like to welcome you here today as the Science, Technology, and Space Subcommittee reviews the fiscal year 2000 budget of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The year 1998 was a great one for NASA -- marked by distinguished achievements and explorations. Administrator Goldin should be proud of the men and women who work tirelessly on his behalf to ensure that the United States maintains its competitive edge and continues to be the marvel of the world. I am fortunate to have witnessed the historical day at the Kennedy Space Flight Center when John Glenn made his heroic return to space and reminded every American how far our space program has come. Just weeks after John Glenn's flight, the first two elements of the International Space Station, Zarya and Unity, were launched into orbit bringing reality to a design envisioned by President Ronald Reagan in 1984. NASA continued to denote this historic year by awarding a new infrastructure management contract to Lockheed Martin, which in turn will consolidate 16 spacecraft operations, reduce the costs of launch facilities, and increase efficiency at NASA by 70 percent.

While we should continue to applaud many of NASA's achievements in 1998, management and financial problems persist for the International Space Station, the agency's most complex and costly endeavor to date. Since 1997, the price for assembly of the Station has grown from $17.4 billion to as high as $26 billion. This increase of approximately $9 billion is equal to the original total estimate for the Station in 1984. Russian participation, furthermore, continues to be a major concern and risk to the program. The Service Module, the principal Russian contribution to the Station, is more than a year behind schedule. Just two months ago, however, the State Department expressed in a letter to the Commerce Committee the important foreign policy implications of this continued science collaboration. **Yet, I believe that this era of fiscal constraint is not the time for the United States to subsidize the Russian Space Agency.**

Other significant NASA projects including the X-33 future demonstrator program and Chandra, the Advanced X-Ray Astronomy Facility, are behind schedule as well. I am increasingly concerned about NASA's ability to properly manage these large program areas.

The Space Science program continues to provide us with new perspectives. The nation has come to expect a steady stream of discoveries such as a subsurface liquid ocean on the moon, Europa; dense balls of super-heavy matter called "magnetars"; and quakes on the surface of the Sun. The Hubble telescope has been a central part of this effort. I anxiously await the repair mission this fall to correct the gyroscope problem.

The commercial space industry continues to capture the attention of the Commerce Committee. Next month Senator Breaux and I plan to examine this industry in further depth. I look forward to hearing about NASA's plan for the future of the Shuttle program and its potential impact on

the burgeoning commercial launch industry.

I would like to close briefly with an observation. The Senate and House recently passed budget resolutions that will put a squeeze on general science funding, and all but ensure that their R&D programs will steadily decrease. In this era of tight fiscal constraint, Congress must confidently decide to fund the right programs -- ones that are managed properly and offer promising innovations for the scientific community. Last year Senator John McCain and I introduced price cap legislation to restrain the International Space Station from growing out of control. As guardians of American taxpayers' dollars, I feel that Congress needs to continue working with NASA to guarantee that its scientific endeavors are executed within a framework of efficiency and fiscal responsibility.

Thank you.